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THE MERCY OF GOD,
TO
KING HEZEKIAH,
TO
BRITONS,
AND
KING GEORGE III.

BRIEFLY CONSIDERED IN
A THANKSGIVING SERMON
PREACHED

On THURSDAY, *April 23d, 1789,*
At MARCH, IN THE ISLE of *ELY*;
AND PUBLISHED

At the General Request of the Congregation,

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M.DCC.LXXXIX.

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BRABRAH JOD

Isaiah xxxviii. 5.

THUS SAITH THE LORD, THE GOD OF DAVID THY FATHER, I HAVE HEARD THY PRAYER, I HAVE SEEN THY TEARS: BEHOLD, I WILL ADD UNTO THY DAYS FIFTEEN YEARS.

AS we are this day called together, to thank God for the wonderful deliverance which he hath wrought for us, in restoring to his former health our King, one of the best Princes that ever reigned in any Nation; I have not a doubt but that you will be impressed with a deep sense of God's abundant mercy, and attentive to what I shall offer to your consideration upon the present occasion.

In the sacred scriptures we find many instances of God's gracious interposition in behalf of his people; and especially when they have cried unto him in their distress: and one instance of this kind, most worthy of remark, we have in the elevated character mentioned in the chapter now before us. King Hezekiah was a virtuous Prince; in every case of distress he

made his situation known to God, and implored his help. When Sennacherib invaded Judah, and defied all their hosts, Hezekiah did not presume to meet so distinguished a conqueror, rashly in his own strength; but sent to the Lord's Prophet, requesting that he would pray to God for him and his people: And, not resting upon the efficacy of the Prophet's prayer, himself, more wisely, besieged the Throne of Grace, in order to interest God in his favour. He said, "O Lord our God, save us from the hand of Sennacherib, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only." And what was the issue of Hezekiah's prayer? The Almighty stooped from his throne; he shewed Sennacherib that he will not forsake his people; that he is a God that heareth prayer; for he sent his angel, and in one night, "smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred and fourscore and five thousand." This is one of the most glorious acts of Divine Providence, recorded in holy writ; and it teacheth us and our king, to confide in God, whenever an host of enemies rise up against us. Notwithstanding this singular deliverance, we do not find that Hezekiah ever prostrated himself before God to return him thanks for it; but tho' this doth not appear, yet surely he could not be so highly ungrateful, as ever to suffer such an extraordinary mercy to be erased from his remembrance. However, in the next account which we have of him, we see God's Prophet waiting upon him with this message: "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." After such a message from the Lord's Prophet, no possible hope

hope of the continuance of life could remain, except the Almighty could be prevailed upon to alter his decree. The King, possessing the love of life, and naturally wishing for a longer period, wept sore at the thought of his immediate dissolution. This trying dispensation would bring to his recollection what the Lord had done to the Host of the Assyrians: He therefore again exerciseth faith in God, and prayeth fervently, "that he might not go down into the pit;" saying to the Almighty, "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee." This manner of his pleading with the Lord, sheweth, that he pledged himself to be grateful, if God would but spare his life: And it proveth also, that he was well informed of his duty, and of the divine promises. And there is one promise in the book of Psalms, which was applicable to his case, and was probably known to him: "Call upon me, saith God, in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." And no sooner had he made his case known to the Almighty, than he received the joyful tidings contained in the words of our text: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." Here we may observe, in what an emphatical manner the Almighty communicated his promise to Hezekiah: It were enough to have said, "I will add unto thy days fifteen years:" this would have been sufficient for the purpose of the afflicted king: But the gracious mode of the promise, the pleasing repetitions contained in it, add infinitely to its value; and shew to us, that
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when God conferreth a favour, he doth it in a manner worthy of himself. The Almighty, under the Jewish Theocracy, chose to be known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but as David was, in many respects, a man after his own heart, the Lord, in succeeding ages, when he addressed himself, by his prophets to his people, delighted in the appellation of the God of David; and we all know how peculiarly the Israelites were attached to their forefathers. Hence, Jehovah appeared under one of his most endearing titles, when he ushered in the gracious promise in the text: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father." And now observe how the Almighty dwelleth upon the attention which he had paid to the supplication of his servant; "I have *heard* thy prayer, "I have *seen* thy tears:" and then followeth the promise, "Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." I leave you to conceive how great, how inexpressible, must have been the joy of King Hezekiah upon receiving such a promise. In the same chapter we have the particulars of his thanksgiving; and how he went up to the house of the Lord, to bless the name of God for his recovery.

Having shewn what the Almighty did for Hezekiah, we may advert to the present joyful occasion of our assembling; and briefly shew what God hath done for us and our king.

Not many months ago, the Lord was pleased to afflict him, and with a malady the most inexplicable, the most distressing of any incident to the human body: Under this he laboured for three or four months;

months, and all prospect of his recovery was extremely doubtful. And having been one of the best of kings, considered as a man and as a christian, the patron of merit, the friend of piety, and, in the truest sense, the father of his people; his subjects must have been lost to every sympathetic feeling, lost to all sense of duty, not to have mourned, as they have done, throughout the kingdom. No such grief was ever known in this nation: and, I trust in God, a like cause of lamentation may never return. The numbers, sorrowing for our king, far exceeded those of the Egyptians, who mourned for the death of Israel, three score and ten days: And were far greater than those, who, in the plains of Moab, wept thirty days for the loss of Moses. Our distress was universal, in every loyal breast throughout Great Britain, and all its dependencies: Some millions of faithful subjects were sunk in grief, or bathed in tears. Nay, the melancholy news yet rolls upon the ocean, and spreads to the utmost boundaries of the earth; as far as the name of Britain, or the worth of George the Third, are known. Surrounding nations, whether Allies, or our national enemies, felt, and alike lamented, the afflicting stroke. The slaves over the Atlantic, having experienced the mildness of our government, and the goodness of our king, now heave the bitter sigh; and, in his behalf, implore, after their imperfect manner, the great spirit that governs the world. The East Indies, having 'ere this heard of the mercy and justice of our sovereign, in now having had long before his august tribunal, the supposed plunderer of their treasures, the tyrant of the East; they must
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revere and applaud the principles, and must lament the affliction of their assured friend, the great avenger of their wrongs. To comprehend the greatness of our mercy, let us, more particularly, review what was our distress.

The most amiable of her sex, whether as a parent, or a wife; upon whom malice, tho' ever watchful, hath not been able to fix a stain; I mean, the boast, the joy of her people; the best queen that, in any age, ever graced the British throne: Behold, so beloved a character, so highly elevated, and for true worth perhaps the first in the known world: Behold her, tortured with anguish; in the midst of her amiable daughters, all miserable. Her lord under an affliction so melancholy, that reason could not emit, except occasionally, a few sparks of her native light: For a long time prohibited from attempting to soothe, and comfort, her distressed sovereign, her once affectionate husband. What she felt, what she suffered, none can tell; none knows but God alone. And in this state she continued, not for days or weeks only, but for months. This was not all she suffered; this was not the only cause of her distress: In this period of her heavy calamity, there was an additional test of her virtue; a severe trial of her loyalty: There was a most violent opposition; whose violence, and whose triumph, increased daily as the king's malady continued. Their object was to displace all the king's servants; those who had long enjoyed and long deserved the confidence of their sovereign; and had justly merited the approbation of his people. And how the queen bore up under the accumulated

cumulated weight of her troubles, cannot possibly be accounted for, otherwise than from the sacred page; where God promiseth his people, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." If we look, with retrospective view, at the parties in the great council of the nation: there, on the one side, happiness, with ardent hope, mixed with the specious pretext of deep sorrow, sat, apparently highly elated. However, 'tis happy for us, that our wise and virtuous king, from the moment he ascended the throne, determined, and declared to all his dominions, that men of virtue and moral probity should ever stand first in his esteem; and should ever have a decided preference, to fill the first stations, whether in the church or state. And, blessed be God, this hath hitherto been, and we may pray that it ever may be, his mode of choice.

Jethro's advice to Moses, will be the rule of every wise king in the appointment of his servants: "Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, hating covetousness, and place such over the people, to be the rulers of thousands; and *then* all this people shall go to their place in peace."

However refined sophists may pretend, that they can clearly see the distinction between a man's public and private character; that the one may be highly meritorious, while the other is diffusely pestiferous; no one, possessing common sense, can be ravished with the angelic oratory of such a heterogeneous mixture, but he must, at the same moment, be thunder-struck with a just contempt of his principles. Orators, however lu-

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minous,

minous, when destitute of morals, will ultimately ruin any party, or any cause; for independent men, who are the strength of the nation, will never long, and tamely, submit to such would-be legislators. We heard also, during the Egyptian darkness, the king's friends; who, to their immortal honour, proved their loyalty; their attachment, at the trying moment: they did not turn their back in the day of battle; they would not forsake their king; when, and be it remembered, he could neither solicit, promise, nor protect them. They were indeed all told of the land of promise; clusters of grapes from Canaan were hung out in rich abundance; those, who supposed themselves elected to distribute the portions of that fertile soil, fully announced their approaching designation: Every man, then disposed to mutiny, might have ^{had} all his wishes instantly gratified; and the then *dismal* prospect, enforced the arguments, warranted the assertions.

Was there any one possessing so much stern virtue, as not to yield to the temptation? Two hundred and sixty-six disdainfully contemned the grapes. And tho' they fully expected to be the victims of the power, which they judged it their duty to delegate, they would ~~not~~ not bend to any offer; they would not desert their afflicted king.

In short, though we may hear and read much of the patriotism of the ancients, yet we may, probably, with much truth infer, that there is nothing to be found in Greece or Rome; nothing in story, whether ancient or modern, that can shew more virtue, or more loyalty,
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than was shewn in the British Parliament, during the late melancholy indisposition of our king.

During that struggle, which will be memorable as long as history or time endure, the different principles, and each heart, of each individual, in each house, were fully tried; the base metal, and the pure gold, are now no longer a secret; the one is fit only for inferior purposes; while the other will now most gracefully adorn the British senate, and the palace of the best of kings.

But to return: As “afflictions do not spring out of the dust:” as no dispensation, from the Almighty, can affect an individual, or a people, without some reason: possibly our sovereign’s great calamity might be for the sins of the nation: or, more probably it might be, as it will be, for the glory of God. And this we may justly infer from what our Saviour said to the Pharisees, respecting the man who was born blind. However, for whatever reason the Lord was pleased to afflict our king, and through him the whole nation, it is now happy for us; and, as we are assembled for the express purpose, let us bless God for his mercy; and for ever blessed be his holy name! that he hath heard our prayers, hath fully granted our request, by restoring to us our king; and that so *opportunistically*, as just to prevent that deluge of confusion, that fatal distraction, which was fully ripe, and which was within a moment of spreading general discontent, if not also a civil war, among us. And let this consideration have its due weight upon our minds, in order that we may justly value, justly estimate the mercy. In no one instance within our memory, or in

the page of any history, hath God more fully shewn the greatness of his love to a people; or hath more exactly marked the proper instant for the display of his wisdom and his goodness, than in our king's recovery. But why should we marvel at this? He is Jehovah; He glorieth to shew himself God.

If any case cometh near our mercy, it is that mighty deliverance which God wrought for his people at the red sea. The Egyptians, not being able to trace the footsteps of the Almighty in the great deep, vainly thought they saw the way plain before them; they should soon overtake, harass, bring back, or destroy, those under the protection of Jacob's God: but lo, the moment they were all, their chariots and horse-men, in the midst of the sea, the command issued forth; the waters returned; and all the hosts of Pharaoh were cut off; there did not remain undrowned so much as one. The Israelites saw all their enemies dead upon the sea shore; and they have set us an example, by praising God, for such a miraculous, so opportune, so unexpected, so great a deliverance. The relation, between us and our king, is a near relation: Our interests, our prosperity, our happiness, or our misery depend, and under the ordinance of heaven, greatly upon the wisdom, the virtue, the piety of our king. A bad king is one of the greatest curses with which the Almighty can chastise a nation for its sins; and innumerable instances, both in the sacred and profane page, prove the dreadful fact: But may that God, "by whom kings reign," so protect us, that a prince of bad principles may never sway the sceptre of these kingdoms! whereas, a good king,

king, is all we can wish; all we can want; and, the Lord be praised! such a king now sits upon the throne. May he long reign over us; living in the affections of a grateful people; possessing that strength of body, and that vigour of mind, which are so essentially necessary to his happiness, and to our peace.

But while we are here thanking God, and recounting his mercies, do you not find your minds upon the wing, to that solemn, that grand scene, which now, at this moment, overwhelms, with its magnificence, the whole metropolis? Possibly it may be lawful for us to tread that hallowed ground. Behold then, and join that immense concourse! But did you ever feel that finest sensation of which the human mind is capable, which ariseth from a profusion of tears of joy? Or, if you have hitherto possessed so much stoical apathy, as to continue callous to the most generous feelings of the soul; yet, that divine sight, must melt your adamant texture; must compel you to participate in those emotions, which the excess of joy alone can excite; and, which probably approach the nearest to the felicity of Heaven. There behold our beloved king, as if raised from the dead; perfectly restored; and restored to the prayers of his people. There you behold our gracious queen; the ornament of her sex; the admiration of the world: There you view all the great officers of state, those worthies, who, in hope against hope, stood *firm* in the day of our distress: You contemplate the grandest sight that mortals can exhibit, or that can be seen on this side the heavenly state: all in silent, in awful procession. Let us reverently attend; let posterity witness;
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let succeeding princes, when necessary, piously imitate: They are all going to assist their king, in his most solemn, his most public thanksgiving to Almighty God. Thousands, in holy stupor, behold their restored sovereign; tens of thousands, in extasy inexpressible, weep over him: Angels are admitted, as joyful spectators of the interview: Jehovah himself beholdeth with approbation: none but apostates; none but devils, abhor the fight. By this public act of our king, he proves to all the nations upon the earth, that he believes the religion which he professes; and possesses that faith in God, which he so nobly defends. May God Almighty, this day, graciously accept him, and his thank-offering; and let all the people say, Amen. And may we, thus highly favoured of the Lord, study to live daily in the fear of God; in loyal and grateful obedience to the king; and in love one towards another. And whatever we do; whether we bless God for his mercies, or pray for the continuance of them, "let us do all, in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, by him."

F I N I S.